



# THE WITNESS

## St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

**Volume 30, Issue 10**  
**The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor**

**October 2019**  
**Church Phone (405) 843-5333**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chapter IX of the Westminster Confession of Faith is entitled "Of Free Will". It is a rather short chapter and one might be surprised that in a confession that speaks so much on the topics of election and predestination that there would be a chapter on free will at all. It is not that the Westminster Divines denied that human beings have free will; what they denied is that humans have free will when it comes to their eternal salvation. One of the great debates of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was between Erasmus and Martin Luther on this very topic. Erasmus wrote a book titled *The Freedom of the Will*. Luther responded by writing a book titled *The Bondage of the Will*. As a side note, Roland H. Bainton wrote excellent biographies about both men: *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* and *Erasmus of Christendom*.

Paragraph I of Chapter IX sets forth the Westminster's understanding of free will where it says, "God has endued the will of man with the natural liberty, that is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined good, or evil." James 1:14 sets forth our free will to choose good or evil when we are faced with temptation: "But each person is tempted when he is lusted and enticed by his own desire." Jesus in Matthew 17:12 speaks of the Jewish leaders' free will in terms of how they treated John the Baptist: "But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased."

So where is free will limited? In our ability to do anything towards our own salvation. Paragraph III of Chapter IX says, "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." Ephesians 2:1-2a and 4-5 says, "And you were *dead* in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world...But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were *dead* in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved..."

The argument is that a dead person has no free will and since we are dead in our trespasses (spiritually dead) we have no free will when it comes to spiritual matters and choosing salvation. Notice in Ephesians 2 that our salvation is all the work of God, "not a result of works" (2:9). It is because of His mercy that God made us alive, spiritually alive with Christ.

Paul emphasizes elsewhere that this state of sin in which we find ourselves is common to all human beings: "None is righteous, no not one...All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:10, 12, 23). The amazing thing is that while we were in this state of sin and worthlessness, God intervened on our behalf. "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...but God

shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

So if we are dead how can we come to God? Jesus answers this question: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (John 6:44, 65)

The part of our free will which was lost as a result of the fall is regained when we are made alive in Christ. “When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He frees him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by His grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly, or only, will that which is good, but does also will that which is evil.” (Westminster, paragraph IV, chapter IX)

So when will we be completely free from this remaining corruption that is within us? “The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.” (Westminster, paragraph V, chapter IX) We should all long for and look forward to that day. Let us give God the glory for the amazing grace He has shown to us sinners.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

### Worship Schedule

Every Sunday

9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship



### OCTOBER SERMON TOPICS

During the month of October we will be continuing our study of 1 Corinthians with the exception of the second Sunday when I will be out of town.

- October 6 1 Corinthians 9:1-14  
*Christian Rights Acknowledged*
- October 13 Justin Magdellini preaching
- October 20 1 Corinthians 9:15-27  
*Christian Rights Surrendered*
- October 27 1 Corinthians 10:1-13  
*The Evil of Self-indulgence Illustrated*

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

Jane Goodall

### September Session Minutes

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Discussion was conducted concerning the possible selling of the church van.

**FELLOWSHIP:** The Ice Cream Social went very well with approximately 48 people attending. Our Thanksgiving celebration will be held at church on November 17, 2019.

**NOMINATIONS:** The Nominating Committee (John Hermes, Frank Miranda, Wendy Smith and Pat Robison), will be looking to fill two elders and two deacons positions for 2020.

**NURTURE:** All Sunday school teachers are in place for the upcoming year. Way Day is off and running for this year (EVERYONE IS INVITED).

**OUTREACH:** Outreach Fall Celebration will be held at church on October 19 from 4-6PM. The activities will be similar to last year.

**WORSHIP:** World Communion Sunday is October 6. Pastor Mark will be out of town October 13. The substitute will be Justin Magdellini.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Termite control service will be treating portions of the church. We will self-treat the areas that are not affected to make sure that these additional areas do not become an issue.

### SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – October 6 & 20 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – October 7 & 28 at 12:30PM, church library.

Tuesday Bible Study – No class this month.

Men's Prayer Group – Saturday mornings at 7:30AM.



### In Need Of Prayer?

In case you didn't know, St. Stephen's maintains a very active Prayer Chain for those special situations needing extra prayer. We can't promise that your every need will be fulfilled, or every prayer answered in the way you want, but we can promise that you and your loved ones will be lifted up in prayer. Thankfully, God takes over from there. For prayer, call Doris Cornell (605-6172) or Treva Gullett (735-9908).

### **Greeters/ Ushers**

**October Greeters:** Jon & Dorothy Powell

**October Ushers:**

**October 6** – Rebecca & Randy Stateler, Christa & Sumish Charlie

**October 13** – Ashley McCormick, Wendy Smith, Pat Robison, Nancy Spradling

**October 20** – Michael Bassett, Ashley McCormick, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

**October 27** – Youth

### *Fellowship Hour Treats*

**October 6** – Joan & Frank Miranda, Pat Robison

**October 13** – Treva & Jim Gullett, Marilyn Hanson

**October 20** – Wendy Smith, Erin Von Tungeln

**October 27** – Karen & Matt Stillwell, Keith & Karin Seidemann

### **NEW MEMBERS**

On Sunday, September 1, we welcomed **Keith & Karin Seidemann** to the St. Stephen's family.

### **Way Day Dates 2019**

October 9, 16 & 23



### **St. Stephen's Fall Festival**

October 19 4:00-6:00PM

Theme: *Glow with God*

Moon bounce, pumpkin decorating, trunk or treat, games, hotdogs

### **Fellowship Refreshment List:**

**ATTENTION ALL YOU COOKS and/or SUNDAY REFRESHMENT CONSUMERS.**

We are revising and updating our Sunday Fellowship provider list and are looking to add some new snack providers. As it goes, you would bring a Sunday morning refreshment (i.e. donuts, pastries, fresh fruit, fruit breads, frozen snacks) - the food you see on Sunday mornings. Such items should be brought to the kitchen by 10:15AM. If you would be interested in participating, please inform either Laurie Daub or Kent Larason.



### **October Key Verse**

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart”  
(Proverbs 3:5a)

### **Bible Story/Scripture**

Week of September 29 is REVIEW

Week 5 - Solomon Asks For Wisdom  
(1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:3-28)

Week 6 - Solomon Writes Many Proverbs  
(1 Kings 4:29-34; Proverbs 1:1-7)

Week 7 - Solomon Turns Away From God  
(1 Kings 11:1-13)

Week of October 27 is REVIEW

*Robin Page*

### **SEQUENCE - OCTOBER 22**

#### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

November 17 - Thanksgiving Potluck  
Fellowship will provide turkey and rolls.

#### **STAINED GLASS**

St. Stephen's has a wealth of talent and creativity. You see it in many ways. In the sanctuary and entrance doors, you see beautiful stained glass windows designed and constructed by members. Jean and Kent Larason are interested in starting up a new generation of stained glass creators. If you would be interested please let Jean or Kent know and we can develop a plan of action. We have a great workshop and can teach and instruct as we go. It is a great deal of fun. Let us know.



#### **MEET OUR ST. STEPHEN'S FAMILY**

Our dear reporter, Margo Whiting, is taking this month off to recoup from eye surgery but will be back in November with another St. Stephen's family member.



The Oklahoma Chamber Symphony will present its 2019/2020 season opening concert on Saturday, October 19 at 7:30PM in the Jasco Chapel at Mid-

America Christian University (3500 SW 119 St.). Admission is free. For more information go to [okchambersymphony.com](http://okchambersymphony.com) or [kalebbenda.com](http://kalebbenda.com).



*Hope Has A Name*

This is a church member-requested hymn.

“Hope Has A Name” is a song about the hope for our future because of Jesus Christ. Meant to express more than just wishful thinking, “Hope Has A Name” is a statement of confident expression that God will fulfill promises, assurances in the conclusions of God’s plans. This can be found in the simple, yet profound, chorus:

*Hope has a name His name is Jesus  
My Savior’s cross has set this sinner free  
Hope has a name His name is Jesus  
Oh Christ be praised I have victory*

Hope, by nature, is always looking forward. It is never complacent, always moving onward. The final verse articulates this aspect of hope:

*There’ll be a day my hope complete  
Now home in glory Your face I’ll see  
My pain no more my fear will cease  
I bow my life I fix my eyes  
On Christ my King*

“Hope Has A Name” is a signature song of the Christian band River Valley Worship. It was written in 2017 by band members Ryan Williams, Aaron Johnson, Benjamin Cruse, and Evan John. River Valley Worship is led by worship leader Ryan Williams and is the “expression of worship through song” for River Valley Church in Minnesota. About their music they said “Our music is inspired through what God is doing in our church and is our response to him. We are committed to continually resource

our local church and the Body of Christ with new worship songs and a deep passion to see people connect with the Living God in a real and personal way.”

For Hymn of the Month requests, contact Kaleb at [Kaleb.B.Benda@gmail.com](mailto:Kaleb.B.Benda@gmail.com) or (405)-410-9331.

**Salvation Army Request**

Reminder that we are collecting small soaps like the ones you get at hotels or motels. Please bring them to the church office.

**Prescription Drugs Needed**

If you have any prescription drugs to donate, please give them to Laurie. **No expired medications** will be accepted.



**UNIMAGINABLE IMPACT**

You don’t know how many people have been strengthened because you asked God to encourage them; how many people have been healed because you prayed for their bodies; how many spiritual runaways have come home because you prayed for their souls. None of us may ever know the true effects of our prayers this side of death. But we do know this: History belongs to the intercessors.

John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*



**Share some laughs — or groans — with these autumn-themed jokes.**

- What did the tree say to autumn? “Leaf me alone!”
- What did one autumn leaf say to another?  
“I’m falling for you.”
- How do you fix a broken pumpkin?  
With a pumpkin patch.
- Why are trees very forgiving? Because in the fall they “let it go” and in the spring they “turn over a new leaf.”
- How do leaves get from place to place?  
With autumn-mobiles.
- What’s the ratio of a pumpkin’s circumference to its diameter? Pumpkin pi.

**CHURCH OFFICERS**

**Elders**

**Class of 2019**

Dwight Daub	618-7497	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Kent Larason	808-3971	Fellowship

**Class of 2020**

John Hermes	202-9621	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Mark McBride	410-2003	Worship

**Class of 2021**

Lori Pickrell	503-9585	Treasurer
John Robison	627-3565	Outreach
Joan Miranda	210-1731	Nurture

**Deacons**

**Class of 2019**

Jaquelyn Kuhn	424-2123	Transportation
Kym Manning	426-7298	Van

**Class of 2020**

Christa Charlie	834-7031	Flowers
Nancy Spradling	206-5828	Ushers/Greeters
Randy Stateler	620-253-6431	Maintenance

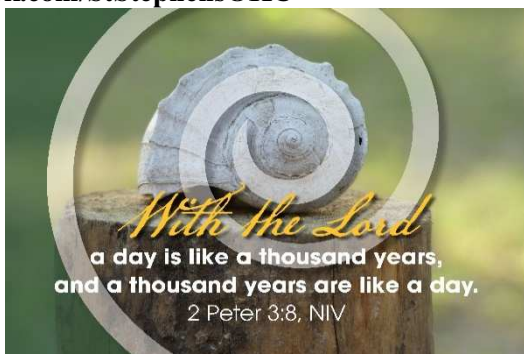
**Class of 2021**

Michael Bassett	942-2074	Church Work Days
Robin Page	514-8240	Missions
Erin Von Tungeln	410-5901	Clerk

**WITNESS DEADLINE**

**October 21** is the deadline to submit articles for the November *Witness*. You may bring items to the church office or e-mail them to: [secretary@ststephensokc.org](mailto:secretary@ststephensokc.org). Thanks! Laurie Daub, St. Stephen's Secretary

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- 1 Patty H. Robison
- 8 Hope Hudson
- 8 Devin Page
- 8 Seth Wilson
- 9 Arden Gatlin
- 9 Joy Jones
- 12 Brianna Jones
- 17 William Larason
- 18 Doris Cornell
- 22 Molly McBride
- 22 Shelley Dutcher
- 23 Lucy McBride
- 23 Brayden Murphy
- 23 Audrey Daub
- 26 Holly Welte
- 28 Jimalee Murphy
- 30 Linda Merriweather



- 5 Curt & Susan Almen
- 7 Frank & Joan Miranda

*\*\*If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*



**Special Dates**

World Communion Sunday, *October 6*  
Reformation Sunday, *October 27*  
Reformation Day, *October 31*

“When someone is going through a storm, your silent presence is more powerful than a million empty words.”  
Thema Davis